

Give ex-offenders a Second Chance

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"About 4,200 prisoners -- an average of 350 a month -- were released back into Indianapolis' neighborhoods from state prisons in the fiscal year that ended in June. That is a 37-percent increase over the number released five years earlier."

Indianapolis Star Editorial Board

A statistic from the Indiana Department of Correction offers insight into why the City-County Council's Rules and Public Policy Committee should pass the proposed "Second Chance" ordinance.

About 4,200 prisoners -- an average of 350 a month -- were released back into Indianapolis' neighborhoods from state prisons in the fiscal year that ended in June. That is a 37-percent increase over the number released five years earlier.

Few of the men and women leave prison with jobs in place.

Although employment is a key to keeping them from returning to prison, few ex-offenders are likely to be hired because of employers' concerns about liability. As a result, ex-offenders often seek work with temporary agencies or commit more crimes. Such recidivism is one reason behind the city's crisis of rising crime.

Encouraging current and future city contractors to hire more ex-offenders could help eliminate barriers to employment. Such is the goal of the Second Chance ordinance, introduced by council members Ike Randolph and Sherron Franklin.

Under the plan, a firm committed to hiring ex-offenders -- or already doing so -- would be given a leg up in the city's request for proposals process. Ex-offenders also would be able to apply for training programs such as the governor's Major Opportunities Plan to gain skills needed for family-sustaining jobs.

The council's Rules and Public Policy Committee is expected to vote on the proposal tonight. Unlike

many crime-related issues, the ordinance would cost the city little if any money.

The Second Chance plan offers council members an opportunity to confront one of the underlying causes of rising crime. It deserves their support.

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.

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